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HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION

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WHEREAS, Several recent economic and academic studies have demonstrated a growing skills gap among workers in the nation; and

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WHEREAS, These studies have demonstrated that the greatest disparity in skills exists among the nation's traditionally underrepresented minority populations, specifically African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans; and

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WHEREAS, A logical and efficient manner of addressing this skill gap is through the provision of post-secondary education; and

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WHEREAS, Illinois needs to improve college access for all of its citizens in order to address the skill gap, provide a cadre of more qualified and competent workers for Illinois businesses, and improve the State economy; and

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WHEREAS, Traditionally underrepresented populations, specifically African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans, make up an increasingly higher percentage of the State's population, and thus will be called upon to make up an increasingly higher percentage of the State's workforce; and

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1 WHEREAS, Traditionally underrepresented populations,
2 specifically African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans,
3 make up a disproportionately lower percentage of those students
4 attending colleges and universities in Illinois as compared to
5 their overall Illinois population; and

6 WHEREAS, It has been demonstrated that traditionally
7 underrepresented student populations are more successful in
8 their degree attainment when they are taught and supported by
9 faculty and staff that includes those of similar ethnic and
10 cultural backgrounds; and

11 WHEREAS, Traditionally underrepresented populations,
12 specifically African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans,
13 make up a disproportionately lower percentage of the faculty
14 and staff at colleges and universities in Illinois as compared
15 to their overall Illinois population; therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
17 NINETY-FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE
18 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that a bi-partisan task force on the
19 status of underrepresented minorities in higher education is
20 commissioned to evaluate the status of traditionally
21 underrepresented populations, specifically African Americans,
22 Latinos, and Native Americans, in this State's public and
23 private institutions of higher education; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That membership on this task force include 2
2 Republican and 2 Democrat members of the House of
3 Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House; 2
4 Republican and 2 Democrat members of the Senate, appointed by
5 the President of the Senate; the Chairperson, or his or her
6 designee, of the State Board of Education, the Executive
7 Director, or his or her designee, of the Board of Higher
8 Education, and the Executive Director, or his or her designee,
9 of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission; and the head, or
10 his or her designee, of a group representing independent
11 Illinois colleges and universities, the head, or his or her
12 designee, of a group representing black concerns in higher
13 education in Illinois, the head, or his or her designee, of a
14 group representing Latinos and higher education in Illinois,
15 and the head, or his or her designee, of a group representing
16 the interests of community colleges in Illinois, each appointed
17 jointly by the Speaker of the House and President of the
18 Senate; and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That this task force assess accessibility of
20 institutions of higher education in Illinois for those in the
21 above-stated Illinois populations who want to enroll as
22 students; and be it further

23 RESOLVED, That the task force assess the representation of

1 these populations in all job categories, including faculty,
2 staff, and civil service, at institutions of higher education
3 in Illinois; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the task force assess issues of campus
5 climate that might affect the success of students and the
6 retention of faculty and staff at institutions of higher
7 education in Illinois; and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the task force pay particular attention
9 during its assessment of those college and university programs
10 that target areas of the most drastic skills disparity, as
11 identified by previously published economic and academic
12 studies; and be it further

13 RESOLVED, That in order to make these assessments, the task
14 force shall receive assistance from the Board of Higher
15 Education and shall hold a series of regional public hearings
16 on college and university campuses across the State; and be it
17 further

18 RESOLVED, That this task force shall file a report with the
19 General Assembly, the Office of the Governor, the State Board
20 of Education, and the Board of Higher Education upon completion
21 of its assessments, and that this report shall include any
22 findings and recommendations for further legislative action

1 that are generated as a result of the task force's work; and be
2 it further

3 RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be
4 delivered to the the Chairperson of the State Board of
5 Education, the Executive Director of the Board of Higher
6 Education, and the Executive Director of the Illinois Student
7 Assistance Commission.